# The Early Heidegger

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In this chapter I shall discuss the work of Martin Heidegger from 1912 to 1927, but I shall concentrate especially on the Freiburg and Marburg lecture courses leading up to *Being and Time*.

Heidegger's intellectual origins are extremely important for his overall philosophical outlook but also he tended to a degree of self-mythologization in later retrospective writings. Heidegger's intellectual development was less monolithic and focused that his later assertions to William Richardson[1] and others might lead one to think. For instance, it is clear that the 'question of Being' (*die Seinsfrage*) is not the dominant theme of his early writings, which are more concerned to make precise his understanding of the very nature of *philosophy* and to articulate the nature of historical *human existence* (what he first called 'life' and then 'Dasein') in facticity and finitude. Secondly, contrary to his later 1963 account in 'My Way to Phenomenology' (TB 74) it is not at all clear that Franz Brentano's *On the Several Senses of Being in Aristotle*, [2] the first philosophical text Heidegger read while still in the Gymnasium, really did offer much of an inspiration.[3] At best, it led him to distinguish the *existentialia* of Dasein from the categories that apply to other entities. Finally, despite their close friendship and collaboration for more than a decade (1916 to 1927), Heidegger was never a *student* of Husserl's. Heidegger had already completed both his doctorate and his Habilitation thesis before he first met Husserl in Freiburg shortly after the latter's arrival there in April 1916. Husserl himself had just lost his son in the war and it seems that, at least in Husserl's eyes, Heidegger gradually began to fit the role of Husserl's adopted son. Heidegger himself displayed less than filial loyalty in his public and private evaluations of the 'old man'.

Largely because of the poverty of his parents, Heidegger had begun his studies as a Catholic seminarian and theology student. His 1914 doctoral thesis, an analysis of the nature of judgement in which he criticised both Rickert and Lask, was entitled *Die Lehre vom Urteil in Psychologismus* (*The Doctrine of Judgement in Psychologism,* GA 1 59-188),[4] written under the direction of Arthur Schneider, who held the Chair of Christian Philosophy in Freiburg. It is a somewhat pedestrian critical discussion of psychologism that shows few hints of his later genius.

Heidegger's Habilitation thesis was entitled *Die Kategorien- und Bedeutungslehre des Duns Scotus* (*The Categories and the Doctrine of Meaning in Duns Scotus,* reprinted GA I 189-412), under the

direction of Heinrich Rickert. This thesis was on a text supposedly by Duns Scotus, but in fact written by Thomas of Erfurt. Already in his *Habilitation* (1915), Heidegger had claimed that philosophy had to be not just about values but about 'the value of life (*Lebenswert*)'. Furthermore, he maintained that the formal study of Scholastic thought needed to be balanced by a phenomenological exploration of religious experience:

> I hold the philosophical, more exactly, the phenomenological handling of the mystical, moral-theological, and ascetic writings of medieval scholasticism to be especially crucial in its decisive insight into this fundamental characteristic of Scholastic psychology. (GA 1 205, my translation)

In his efforts to gain an academic position, Heidegger tailored his curriculum vitae and interests. Thus he presented himself as someone interested in the Neo-Scholastic revival of medieval philosophy. Later Karl Jaspers would record in his *Autobiography* that in conversation with Heidegger he expressed his surprise that 'The dedication of Heidegger's first book to Rickert, of his second to Husserl, emphasizes a connection with people of whom he had spoken to me with contempt'.[5] Heidegger was certainly career oriented.

On 21st January 1919, benefitting greatly from the support of Husserl, Heidegger officially became a salaried member of the Freiburg philosophy seminar.[6] Four days later, on 25th January, the 'War Emergency Semester' (*Kriegnotsemester*) commenced, and Heidegger offered his first lecture course, 'The Idea of Philosophy and the Problem of Worldview', in which he explored his own understanding of the true method of philosophy and its relation to phenomenology (GA 56/7 /TDP). The influence of Rickert is clearly visible. In this first course, his question is: what is involved in the very idea of philosophy? Or, as he puts it, he wants to identify the 'essential elements of the idea of philosophy' (GA 56/57 39/TDP 32). Heidegger presents philosophy as a scientific attitude that breaks through the natural attitude and heightens the sense of *life*. Philosophy is presented as a 'primordial science' (*Urwissenschaft*) that should not be allowed degenerate into a 'worldview' (*Weltanschauung*). Phenomenology cannot be understood as a standpoint at all. Philosophy is unique in that it contemplates itself through its history and in this way awakens to a higher spiritual life:

> Every history and history of philosophy *constitutes* itself in life in and for itself, life which is itself *historical* in an absolute sense. (GA 56/57 21/ TDP 18)

It is clear that Heidegger is interested in a way of capturing *life*, while still having sympathy for it. Heidegger questions the manner in which Rickert and other Neo-Kantians had misunderstood the nature of value and validity, but he is also critical of phenomenology—saying the concept of 'lived experience' (*Erlebnis*) has now been devalued to the point of meaninglessness (GA 56/57 66/TDP 55) but he is still trying to remain true to the experience and attend to what is given in it, filtering out all misinterpretation.

This first lecture course gives the impression of a young philosopher struggling to articulate intuitions that are not yet clear to him. The primary sense is of someone resisting and attempting to throw off the existing academic tradition in Germany, especially the Neo-Kantian emphasis on epistemology

and theory of science. There are foreshadowings – when the circular nature of philosophical understanding is mentioned, or the meaning of the 'questioning comportment' (GA 56/57 66/TDP 56), the manner in which humans always belong to an 'environing world' (*Umwelt*), the way in which things are always experienced as worldly, such that one can say 'it worlds' (*es weltet*, GA 56/57 73/TDP 61). Perhaps most intriguingly, Heidegger is already trying to distinguish between objective knowledge which involves distance from things and a kind of 'event of appropriation' or 'happening' (*Ereignis*) in which one is self-involved. Most importantly Heidegger is envisaging that phenomenology must incorporate a new and expanded kind of intuition—'hermeneutic intuition' (*die hermeneutische Intuition*, GA 56/57 117/TDP 98). Already in 1919 Heidegger is attempting to fuse hermeneutical interpreting with phenomenological intuiting.

One of the early Heidegger's major concerns is the meaning of realism. He diagnoses critical realism and critical idealism as both suffering from the same defect—in believing our sense of world and of objects are somehow constituted out of 'sense data' (*Sinnesdaten*). Both idealism and realism presume the primacy of theoretical knowledge--'the primacy of the theoretical (*Primat des Theoretischen*, GA 56/57 87/TDP 73) and assume its stance toward the world as being simply the way things are. The problem is: what is to be understood as the immediately given? (GA 56/57 85/TDP 71). Realism and idealism fail to grasp what being-in-the-world really means. Heidegger wants to understand how the 'environmental' (*das Umweltliche*) is experienced: 'how do I live and experience the environmental?' (GA 56/57 88/TDP 74). Heidegger is already stressing that our primary engagement with things is practical. We should not even say the environment is 'given' because givenness already presupposes the theoretical. 'Thingliness [*Dinghaftigkeit*] marks out a quite original sphere distilled out the environmental' (GA 56/57 89/TDP 75). Once we grasp things, their worldliness disappears. The expression 'it worlds' is supposed to convey the character of pre-theoretical experience. In this first lecture course, Heidegger is interested in the manner in which the world as such is presupposed in various kinds of encounters with things.

Heidegger continued to lecture at Freiburg from 1919 to 1923 and his courses show him developing an independent critical perspective on the then contemporary philosophical scene, specifically Neo-Kantian philosophy (specifically Rickert, Natorp, Windelband, and Emil Lask), phenomenology (Husserl, Scheler), hermeneutics, and life-philosophy (Dilthey, Simmel). No matter what was the announced course title, Heidegger always used the occasion to think deeply about the nature of philosophy as such (what is it? What kind of science? How do we reach it?) and more specifically to interrogate the meaning and value of phenomenology as a mode of approach to the issues (and, in passing, treated in his lectures of issues such as the nature of philosophy as a science, the meaning of 'worldview', the 'externalities' of current study of philosophy in the university, the need for university reform, and so on).

Husserl's own opinion of Heidegger at that time is instructive. At first Husserl saw Heidegger as a 'confessionally bound' Catholic, but he came to appreciate the seriousness with which Heidegger appeared to have embraced Protestantism and regarded him as something of an expert on Martin Luther. For, on 9th January 1919, just prior to taking up his post as Husserl's assistant,

Heidegger himself, in a letter to his former confessor Fr. Krebs, signalled his departure from 'the *system* of Catholicism' and talks of his own 'phenomenological studies in religion' (S 69-70). Similarly, he wrote to his friend Elizabeth Blochmann in May 1919, stating that he was making preparations towards a 'phenomenology of religious consciousness'.[7] In these early Freiburg lectures Heidegger constantly emphasizes that religion as a way of life has its own 'entirely originary intentionality' (*ganz originäre Intentionalität*, GA 60 322/PRL 244), its own structural categories—already described in his 1920/21 lecture course as 'existentialia' (*Existenzialien*, GA 60 232/PRL 173), its own 'worldliness and valuableness' (*Welt- und Werthaftigkeit*, GA 60 322/PRL 244), and its own basic conceptions on which philosophy must not try to impose its own conceptual schemes from without:

> Real philosophy arises not from preconceived concepts of philosophy and religion. Rather the possibility of its philosophical understanding arises out of a certain religiosity [*Religiosität*]—for us the Christian religiosity. …The task is to gain a real and original relationship to history, which is to be explicated from out of our own historical situation and facticity. (GA 60 124-25/PRL 89)

Heidegger claims that no real religion 'allows itself to be captured philosophically' (GA 60 323/PRL 244).[8] Unfortunately, in this 1920-1921 course, -- as in the Freiburg lecture courses generally-- Heidegger is somewhat vague and promissory in his approach to the kind of temporality enjoyed by Christian life and how it orients itself to the eternal. His confidence in describing temporality grows over the years such that, in his 1924 lecture to the Marburg Theological Society, Heidegger is much more detailed in terms of explaining the relation between Dasein and temporality, now deliberately employing his own technical jargon. Here he laments that previous Christian thinkers (paradigmatically Augustine) have always taken their orientation from the eternity (*aei*) enjoyed by God and measured time in some respect as offset against eternity, whereas he wants to clear the foreground by analysing how time is lived in its everyday sense. Dasein itself *is* time (GA 64/CT 20E). Heidegger does recognize that the distinctive claim of Christianity is that time is in some sense 'fulfilled' (e.g. St Paul, Galatians 4: 4), but his own account concentrates on the manner the self disperses itself in the everyday and flees from facing futurity, which is the real essence of human temporality.

Heidegger's interest is to find a way to understand 'life in and for itself' (GA 56/57 125/TDP 106) as he puts it in his 1919 lecture course 'Phenomenology and Transcendental Philosophy of Value'. In his 1919/1920 lecture course 'Basic Problems of Phenomenology' (*Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie*, GA 58), he speaks of an 'original exploration of life' (*Ursprungserforschung des Lebens*, GA 58 155). Heidegger suggests that phenomenology has to describe the special kind of non-objectifying, non-theoretical self-awareness of original experience (GA 58 155-157; see also 257-58). This non-reflective awareness belong to the immediate experience of life. This theme remains – self-reflection is not the best way to grasp the meaning of Dasein. Thus, In his 1927 lecture course, Heidegger emphasises, against Husserlian phenomenology, that self-reflection is not the primary mode in which Dasein is with itself or 'for itself':

> Dasein, as existing, is there for itself, even when the ego does not expressly

> direct itself to itself in the manner of its own peculiar turning around and turning back, which in phenomenology is called inner perception as contrasted with outer. The self is there for the Dasein itself without reflection and without inner perception, *before* all reflection. Reflection, in the sense of a turning back, is only a mode of self-*apprehension*, but not the mode of primary self-disclosure (GA 24 226/BP 159).

In his 1920 lecture course *Phenomenology of Intuition and Expression*, Heidegger presents one of the chief tasks of philosophy as the attempt to awaken and appreciate the sense of *facticity* (*die Faktizität*): 'Philosophy has the task of preserving the facticity of life and strengthening the facticity of Dasein' (GA 59 174; PIE 133). In notes for this course, he writes: 'life --the primary phenomenon!' (*Leben Urphänomen*, GA 59 176). Similarly, in his 1921-1922 lecture course *Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle* he writes: '"Factical life": "life" expresses a basic phenomenological category; it signifies a basic phenomenon' (*Grundphänomen*, GA 61 80/PIA 61). Life, however, is also a vague and ambiguous concept. The key to life is its 'facticity': 'This facticity is something life is, and whereby it is, in its highest authenticity' (GA 61 87/ PIA 66). Facticity is the basic sense of the being of life (ibid.). Furthermore, 'philosophy is historiological cognition of factical life' (GA 61 1/PIA 3). Life is also, Heidegger affirms, 'world-related' (GA 61 85/PIA 65). Thus, in his early lecture courses in Freiburg, Heidegger is concerned less with issues of Being (*Sein*) and more with the concrete sense of factical human existence.

From 1920 to 1923 Heidegger identifies and explores the existential structures that will receive full scale thematization in *Being and Time* (1927). For example, it is in reflection on the existential structures of Christian living that Heidegger develops his particular conceptions of 'everydayness' (*Alltäglichkeit*), where time is experienced primarily as the present, and 'fallenness' (*Verfallen*), the manner in which human life finds itself captivated by the world.[9] When Heidegger writes that 'Christian experience lives time itself' (GA 60 82/PRL 57), he seems to be suggesting that Christianity has a certain stance towards life in its temporal unfolding, one which emphasises a future which has in some sense already arrived, *parousia*, which in traditional Greek means 'arrival' (GA 60 102/PRL 71), and in the Old Testament signifies the arrival of the Lord on the day or Judgement and, in Jewish texts, refers to the arrival of the Messiah. But, Heidegger claims that in Christianity it means the arriving again of the already appeared Messiah and hence its entire conceptual structure has changed. *Parousia* is not characterized by 'waiting' or 'hope', rather the issue is a question about the manner of carrying out one's life, the 'enactment of life itself' (*Vollzug des Lebens*, GA 60 104/PRL 73). Living life constitutes different senses of temporality. Similarly faith (*pistis*) is not interpreted as a kind of believing, a 'taking to be true' (*Fürwahrhalten*, GA 60108/PRL 76) but rather as a 'complex of enactment' (*Vollzugszusammenhang*) of sense, a way of experiencing capable of 'increase' or greater intensity and hence testifying to something like authenticity. Christian hope, as Heidegger interprets it, is not about some future event to come but rather about enduring, coping and resilience in relation to the insecurity of life (GA 60 151/PRL 107). Heidegger is interpreting religious life not in terms of its supposed transcendent meaning but in terms of an historically determined

style of living in and through time, a way of coping with the fundamental insecurity. Christian life involves 'enactment' (*Vollzug*); 'Christian facticity is enactment' (GA 60 121/PRL 86). The challenge for Christian factical life is to remain 'awake and sober' in relation to the enormous challenge of life.

For Heidegger, early Christian religious life has already been Hellenized or 'Greecicized' (Heidegger's word is *Gräzisierung*) due to the influence of 'the specifically Greek interpretation of Dasein and through Greek conceptuality' (GA 61 6/PIA 6). Heidegger here explicitly speaks of 'the Greek worldview' (*die griechische Lebenswelt*, GA 61, 6/) and he is deeply aware – in the spirit of Dilthey—of the manner in which worldviews wither away and are replaced by different worldviews. He wants then to uncover the meaning of historical everyday existence before it is obscured by worldviews – this is *Daseinsanalyse.*

It is a noteworthy feature of this period of Heidegger's intellectual formation that the activity of removing the metaphysical edifice encrusted on religious experience is referred to, already in 1910, as 'destruction' (*Destruktion*, also *Zerstörung*, GA 60 311/PRL 236). Heidegger's model here is Martin Luther's reading of St. Paul. [10] In his 1920 lecture course he articulates the notion of 'phenomenological *Destruktion*' (GA 59 35) or 'phenomenological-critical destruction' (GA 59 30), which should be thought of as not so much 'demolition' (*Zertrümmern*) but rather as 'de-structuring' (*Abbau*, GA 59 35). In his *Phenomenology of Religious Life* lectures, he also speaks of the need to subject modern history of religion to a 'phenomenological destruction' to allow the evidence of its 'fore-conception' to manifest itself (GA 60 78/PRL 54).

Alongside theses explorations of religious life, the early Heidegger was also deeply immersed in Aristotle's account of ethical living. He offered a course on 'Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle' in 1921/1922 (GA 61/PIA) and also prepared a text with a similar title that he submitted as a writing sample to Paul Natorp for consideration for a post in Marburg for which Husserl had recommended him. This writing sample -- the so called *Natorp Bericht* --was rediscovered and published for the first time in 1989.[11] It is a fascinating document that many—including Hans-Georg Gadamer—see as the first step toward *Being and Time*.[12] Heidegger is now explicitly linking phenomenology to a kind of Aristotelian inquiry.He is seeking 'the *being* of factical life' (S 121). The object of research is 'factical human Dasein' (S 115). Life has a tendency to make things easy for itself (S 113). It has a tendency for 'falling' (S 117). Life is always experienced as '*having-been-interpreted*' (S 116). 'Life is always mired in inauthentic traditions and customs of one sort or another' (S 118). It is only when one brings one's own death into explicit focus that life as such becomes visible (S 119). This is genuinely anticipatory of *Being and Time* in that Heidegger now speaks of a 'fundamental ontology' (S 121) of factical Dasein.

In these years Heidegger is also elaborating on the meaning of *hermeneutics*. In his 1921/22 course on Aristotle he is already speaking of 'phenomenological hermeneutics' (GA 61 187/PIA 141; see also S 122) and the fundamental intentional movement of life as *care* (*curare*). By 1923, he is characterizing hermeneutics not as any kind of interpretative *method* but rather as Dasein's own 'wakefulness' (*Wachsein*) with regard to its own existence; hermeneutics is the *self-interpretation* of facticity (GA 63 15/

OHF 12). As Heidegger writes in his *Natorp Bericht*:

> …philosophy is not an artificial occupation that merely accompanies life and deals with "universals" …but rather is a knowing that questions, that is, as research, simply the explicit and genuine actualizing of the tendency towards interpretation that belongs to the basic movements of life in which what is at issue is this life itself and its being … (S 121)

In other words, humans live through self-interpretative engagement with their lives and philosophy is that illumination of that self-interpreting historical living in facticity.

In Autumn 1923 Heidegger moved to Marburg. Heidegger now comes into close contact with Neo-Kantian philosophers such as Nicolai Hartmann, distinguished classicists such as Natorp, and theologians such as Rudolf Otto and Bultmann.[13] But he himself seemed to find more affinity in the writings of Dilthey and Scheler.In 1924, he offered 'Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy' (*Grundbegriffe der aristotelischen Philosophie*, GA 18) which focused on the *Nicomachean Ethics*. The theme is practical life. In 1925, Heidegger was nominated by the Philosophy Faculty for the Chair at Marburg recently vacated by Hartmann. However, his nomination was turned down by the Education Ministry because of insufficient publications. To remedy this gap, he was pressurised by the Dean of the Marburg Faculty to hasten into print the still uncompleted manuscript of *Being and Time*. Heidegger promised to have the typescript to Niemeyer by 1st April 1926. Over the term break, from February to April 1926, Heidegger retired to his hut in Todtnauberg and brought together some 240 pages of *Being and Time* which he arranged --with Husserl's help -- to have printed. Husserl himself even visited Todtnauberg that Spring to assist Heidegger with the proof reading[14]. However, in December 1926, the Education Minister in Berlin declared the publication inadequate and the Chair in Marburg was not offered to Heidegger. Heidegger then went on to publish the full text of *Being and Time, Part I* in Spring 1927 both as a separate book and as part of Husserl's *Jahrbuch*.[15] Heidegger's magnum opus had finally appeared in print, an uneven work that manifests the enormous efforts Heidegger had made to impose a system (transcendental phenomenological ontology) and even an architectonic (see § 8 'Design of the Treatise', GA 2 52-3/BTMR 63-64) on what had been his diverse concrete explorations of human historical existence (his 'preparatory fundamental analysis of Dasein', GA 2 53/BTMR 64) over the preceding decade.

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[1] See Heidegger's Letter to Richardson, in William J. Richardson, *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1963), pp. viii-xxiii.

2 Franz Brentano, *Von der mannigfachen Bedeutung des Seienden nach Aristoteles* (Freiburg, 1862), translated by Rolf George as *On the Several Senses of Being in Aristotle* (Berkeley: U. of California Pr., 1975).

[3] Theodore Kisiel, *The Genesis of Being and Time* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), p. 229, has rightly pointed out that both 'My Way to Phenomenology' and the letter to Richardson stress only Heidegger's involvement with phenomenology and hence are not reliable guides to his overall intellectual development.

[4] M. Heidegger, *Die Lehre vom Urteil in Psychologismus. Eik kritisch-positiver Beitrag zur Logik* (Leipzig: Barth, 1914).

[5] Quoted in Elizabeth Hirsch, 'Remembrances of Martin Heidegger in Marburg', *Philosophy Today* (Summer 1979), pp. 160-69.
**[6]** See Karl Schuhmann, *Husserl-Chronik. Denk- und Lebensweg Edmund Husserls* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1977), p. 231. For the significance of Husserl's achievement in gaining funding for a paid assistantship, see Hugo Ott, *Martin Heidegger. A Political Life*, trans. Allan Blunden (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), pp. 115-16. Heidegger had been a *Privatdozent* but Husserl secured funding for him. It is not clear that Heidegger was actually Husserl's assistant in the formal sense.
**[7]** See *Martin Heidegger-Elizabeth Blochmann Briefe 1918-1969*, hrsg. Joachim W. Storck (Marbach am Necker: Deutsches Literatur-Archiv, 1989, 2nd edn. 1990), p. 16.
**[8]** Heidegger was not alone in wanting to free religion from its philosophical superstructure. Ernst Troeltsch and Rudolf Bultmann were proposing something similar.
[9] In his 'Letter on "Humanism"', Heidegger emphasises that *Verfallen* does not signify the theological Fall of humanity but rather an essential relation of human being to Being, see, GA 9 163/PA 253.
**[10]** John van Buren, *The Young Heidegger* (Bloomington: Indiana U. P., 1994), p. 167, has suggested that Heidegger's first use of the term 'destruction' is in GA 58 139, in connection with Luther's attack on Aristotle and Scholasticism. However, I believe van Buren overstates the case when he claims: 'The young Heidegger saw himself at this time as a kind of philosophical Luther of Western metaphysics' (ibid., p. 167). In fact, Heidegger's tone in his lecture courses is still one of trying to come to terms with the meaning of the various competing philosophical methods (Neo-Kantian, phenomenological, hermeneutic, life-philosophy) that were current in contemporary Germany. It is true, if a little odd, that Heidegger arrived in Marburg with a reputation as an expert on Luther!
[11] See M. Heidegger, 'Phänomenologische Interpretationen zu Aristoteles. Anzeige der hermeneutischen Situation', in *Dilthey-Jahrbruch für Philosophie und Geschichte der Geisteswissenschaften* 6 (1989) pp. 237-274; reprinted in *Phänomenologische Interpretationen zu Aristoteles. Ausarbeitung für die Marburger und die Göttinger Fakultät (1922)* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2003). There is a new English translation by John van Buren 'Phenomenological Interpretations in Connection with Aristotle. An Indication of the Hermeneutical Situation' (S 111-45).
[12] Indeed Husserl had even planned to publish a version of it in Volume VII of his *Jahrbuch* (1924/1925).
[13] On Heidegger's time in Marburg see Elisabeth Hirsch, 'Remembrances of Martin Heidegger in Marburg', *Philosophy Today* (1979), pp. 160-69.
[14] In the tradition of proofreading, it is customary to read the text backward so that typographical errors are more visible as one is not disrupted by the flow of the text. It is possibly for this reason that Husserl did not at that time realise how far Heidegger had departed from his own transcendental phenomenology until he sat down to read and comment on the book in 1929.
[15] In later years Heidegger recalled that *Being and Time* was published in February 1927, whereas Theodore Kisiel, *The Genesis of Being and Time*, op. cit., p. 489, dates it to April 1927. On 8th April 1926--Husserl's birthday--Heidegger presented Husserl with a handwritten dedication page for the book.